

Agricultural Clubs

IN

Rural Schools

Some Suggestions for Organizing Agricultural Clubs
in the Rural Schools for the Study of Agriculture
under the direction of the College
of Agriculture of the Ohio
State University

BY

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Photograph by T. K. Lewis

"No richer gift has autumn poured
From out her lavish horn."—WHITTIER.



By Lewis

"Come forth into the light of things,
Let nature be your teacher."—WORDSWORTH.

AGRICULTURAL CLUBS IN RURAL SCHOOLS

There has been a decided movement in rural schools in the last few years toward educating children in the common things of every day life. This has resulted in some states in adopting nature study work; in others, in the including of elementary agriculture among the studies taught; and in others, the pupils have organized, under the direction of the teacher or superintendent, into clubs for the purpose of learning about the things which surround the child on the farm.

The Agricultural Students' Union, which is composed of the graduates and ex-students of the Ohio State University, has taken up this subject and last year the pupils of Springfield Township, Clarke County, under the direction of Superintendent A. B. Graham, organized a club to carry out the work planned by the Students' Union. The results of this Club were so satisfactory that other schools have decided to take up the work and the Students' Union, at their annual meeting in January, 1904, decided to give more attention and assistance to this line of work which is hereafter to be carried on by the College of Agriculture, of the Ohio State University.

The object of the work is to teach and to interest the children of the rural schools in plant and animal life; to teach them to appreciate the beauties and opportunities of country life. Last year, there were 350,000 children in the rural schools of Ohio. The education of the majority of these children will end with the rural school and a very large part of them will remain in the country to make the agriculture of the future. They will have to deal with the farm crops, the farm animals, the weeds, the birds, the insects, every day of their lives; and the object of the College of Agriculture is to get them interested in these things; to teach them about them. It is not proposed to replace any of the studies that are now taught but to form clubs which will serve as an adjunct to and supplement the work that is now being taught.

HOW THE WORK MAY BE TAKEN UP

The first essential in taking up the work is that the teacher shall be in sympathy with the work and will encourage and assist the pupils in their club, and the success of the movement will depend upon the teacher. Pupils are naturally interested in the things with which they are constantly associated and only need the encouragement of their teacher to take up the work enthusiastically. The most ideal condition for the work is to be found in the centralized township schools. Here the pupils of the township are brought together and enough of them, who will be glad to take up the work, can easily be found to form a club. In the district schools of townships having a township superintendent, clubs may be organized as a township club with members from the different schools. In the district schools, which do not have any township

supervision, and this class represents the larger part of the rural schools, clubs may be organized by the teachers and even though they only have four or five members the first year, it will be found that efficient work can be done, and if successful, many more will want to take it up another year.

In order that the work may be taken up systematically and that there may be some local organization, the following constitution is proposed as a basis for such an organization. It will be found that the organization of a club will give a distinction to the work and the pupils will take a pride in feeling that they are members; it will also systematize the work so that the College of Agriculture can more readily keep in touch with it. In case the club is organized simply in one district, the name of the district may be substituted for the name of township in the constitution. As soon as a club is organized, the College of Agriculture should be notified of the date of organization, the name of the club, the officers and the names of the charter members.



BOYS IN THEIR EXPERIMENTAL PLATS.

Furnished by O. J. Kern

CONSTITUTION

SECTION I: The name of this Organization shall be.....
Township School Agricultural Club of.....County;

SECTION II: The members of this Club shall be pupils of the country schools of.....Township, not less than eight years old;

SECTION III: The object of the Club shall be to study farm crops, farm animals, birds, insects, weeds, and to make experiments under the direction of the College of Agriculture of the Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio;

SECTION IV: The officers of the Club shall be President, Vice-President, and Secretary, and they shall hold office for one year or until their successors are elected;

SECTION V: The duties of the President shall be to preside at all meetings of the Club; the duties of the Vice-President shall be to preside in the absence of the President; the duties of the Secretary shall be to keep all records of the meeting of the Club and to make reports of the progress of the Club of the College of Agriculture of the Ohio State University at such times as they may direct;

SECTION VI: It shall be the duty of all members of this Club to carry out the work outlined by the College of Agriculture to the best of his or her ability and to make reports to them as directed, and the failure to do this will forfeit membership in this Club;

SECTION VII: Any club of ten or more active members may upon approval of the College of Agriculture become a member of the "Ohio Federation of Rural School Agricultural Clubs" but not more than one club shall be entitled to membership from the same township.



A CLARK COUNTY BOY AND HIS CORNFIELD.

WORK FOR THE CLUBS

The work is of two kinds: First, experiments in growing crops, such as corn, potatoes, small fruits, vegetables, or flowers; second, observation and collecting work, including the identification of common weeds, birds, trees, and insects, the making of school herbariums and collections of common weed seeds. Both lines are important and should be carried on by a club, but the first is indispensable. Each member must have a small plot of ground at his home, if not over one-half a square rod, to grow some crop for which the member of the Club shall be entirely responsible.

The College of Agriculture will this year offer the following lines of work to be carried out under its direction:

(1) EXPERIMENT WITH CORN.

The College will furnish to each member of the Club choosing this experiment, enough field corn of one of the best varieties for the state to plant two shocks. This is to be planted in the field with other corn so as to test the variety, with the variety being grown on the farm. The teacher can explain to the pupils how to count the rows and plant the corn so that the shocks when cut will stand in the row with the other corn and by planting in this way it will not be mixed with the other corn in cutting and the use of markers for the plot, which are hard to keep up in a corn field, may be avoided.

Record blanks for the members to make record of the date of planting, the depth, the date it appeared above ground, the date of tasselling, yield, and other data that will teach them to observe will be furnished by the Agricultural College, and these records must be kept and returned to them at the close of the season. This work is especially recommended for boys, but several girls took it last year and were among the most successful with it.



THE HARVESTED CROP—A PROUD MOMENT.

(2) VEGETABLE EXPERIMENTS.

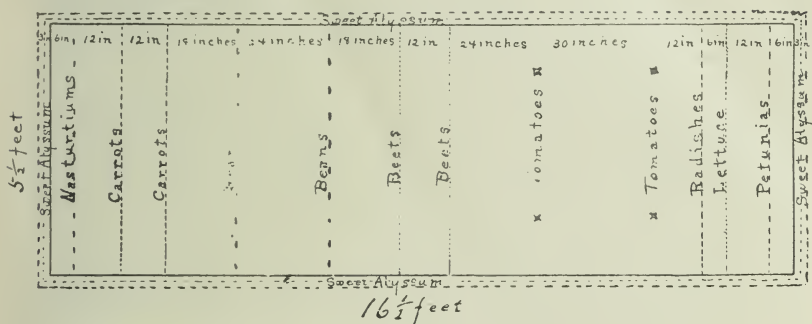
The College will furnish to each member of a club taking this experiment the seed of six different kinds of vegetables, as follows: Beets, radishes, lettuce, beans, carrots, and tomatoes.

The lettuce and radishes are quick maturing crops and can be harvested in time to be followed with beans or tomatoes. Where the pupils are near a market, considerable money can be earned from the sale of the vegetables. Record blanks will be furnished with the seeds for a record to be made of the growth and yield of the vegetables and these are to be sent to the College as in the corn experiment at the close of the season. This work is especially suitable for girls, but may be taken by the boys as well.

(3) EXPERIMENT WITH FLOWERS.

The College will furnish members choosing this experiment seven varieties of flower seeds, consisting of pot marigold, petunia, nasturtium, phlox, candy tuft, portulaca and sweet alyssum, with directions for planting and record blanks as in the other experiments, the latter to be sent to the College at the end of the season.

Members of clubs may choose either the Experiment with Corn and the Experiment with Flowers or the Experiment with Vegetables and the Experiment with Flowers, but will not be allowed to take the Experiment with Corn and the Experiment with Vegetables at the same time.



SUGGESTED ARRANGEMENT FOR VEGETABLES AND FLOWERS.

OBSERVATION AND COLLECTING WORK

The amount of this work taken up will depend upon the encouragement of the teacher and the enthusiasm of the members of the Club. The following are suggested as suitable for this purpose and may be modified to suit the conditions and the personal tastes of the pupils.

COLLECTING AND IDENTIFYING WILD FLOWERS.

This can be begun as soon as flowers appear and continue until the last fall flowers disappear. Have the children bring in the different kinds of flowers and the name by which they know them; if they do not know any name for them, teach them the name by which the flowers are known in the locality.

In addition to this, they may be taught the common names given in a standard botany if the same differs from the local name, but do not try to teach them the scientific name of the flower or to teach them systematic botany; teach them to love the flower as a

perfect whole and not to dissect and pull them to pieces to determine their exact scientific name,—this will come later; teach them to observe the difference between flowers, the difference in habit of growth, and in the place in which they are found growing.

To the thoughtful teacher, the modifications that can be made of this work to hold the child's interest will be almost endless.

This work should not be confined to the wild flowers alone, but the common weeds of the farm should be included, and it will be surprising to find how few of them are known by the average country child or adult either, for that matter,—plants that they see every day in the summer are passed unnoticed and unknown.



A WELL PLANTED CORNER.

By Lewis

"The sweetest thing that ever grew
Beside a human door."—WORDSWORTH.

CLUB HERBARIUMS.

The making of a club herbarium from the specimens that are brought in by the members will stimulate them to hunt the rarer flowers. The dried specimens may be mounted on ordinary foolscap paper very satisfactorily, and the common name of the plant written in the lower right-hand corner, together with the name of the member collecting the specimen and the locality in which it is found. The specimens should show the entire plant, including the roots, stem, leaves, and flowers. Whenever a herbarium is made by a club, the Secretary should report it to the College, together with the number of specimens, and any specimens that the teacher has been unable to identify, may be sent to us for identification.

IDENTIFICATION OF BIRDS, TREES, AND INSECTS.

If the children are taught to notice the birds, trees, and insects, which they see, and if the teacher will assist them, they will soon learn to identify the most common ones. Some of the pupils who are the dullest in their studies will often prove to be the most apt in studying nature, and in this way the teacher may find the way to interest them in their other studies. For example, let the members of the Club keep account for a week of the different kinds of birds or trees or insects that they have seen and report at a Club meeting or give their report at a roll call in the school, at the end of the week. The ingenuity of the teacher will naturally suggest ways in which the Club can best take up this work.

SOIL TESTING.

A line of work which creates much interest is the use of litmus paper in testing the condition of the different soils of a community for the presence of acid. Acid or sour soils are quite common in various parts of the state and when soils are in such a condition,



AN EXHIBIT BY SUPT. GRAHAM'S BOYS AND GIRLS.

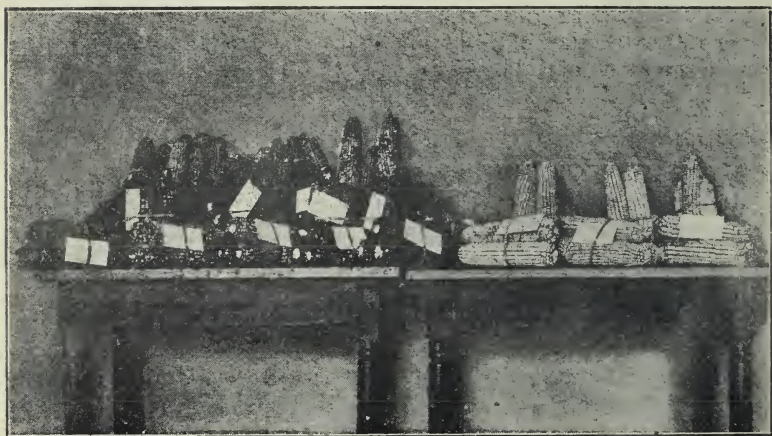
clover and many other crops fail to make a proper growth. Lime is the remedy in such cases, and if it is needed, this can be readily shown by testing the soil with litmus paper. The litmus paper and full directions for its use will be furnished to the clubs on application of the College.

COLLECTION OF WEED SEEDS.

The collection and identification of weed seeds will be found to be interesting work for the members in the fall. The seeds should be gathered, cleaned, and thoroughly dried. The seeds may

be gathered in small envelopes, which can be procured at a small cost and the name of the plant from which they were taken, the date, and the name of the collector written on the outside. A neat collection for the Club can be made by putting the seed in one-half ounce glass vials and labelling each bottle. Care should be taken in making such a collection to have the seed as clean as possible and perfectly dry or they will mould in the vials unless this precaution is taken.

Any seed that cannot be identified may be sent to the College and they will be identified and returned to the Secretary of the Club. Collections of weed seeds, like club herbariums, should be reported to the College of Agriculture by the Secretary of the Club, giving the number of varieties in the collection.



AN EXHIBIT OF CORN RAISED BY CLARK COUNTY BOYS AND GIRLS

THE VALUE OF THE WORK

The value of the entire work lies in opening the eyes of the children to see the things that they have looked at from birth and yet have never really seen; to teach them to see the real beauty of nature and country life, and to learn in the words of Whittier to

“Give fools their gold, give knaves their power,
Let fortune’s bubble rise and fall;
Who sows a field or trains a flower
Or plants a tree, is more than all.”

The value of this work to the rural schools can best be told by those who have tried it, and for the purpose of determining this point, I wrote Superintendent A. B. Graham, asking him of what

value he regarded the work as an adjunct to the rural school work and whether from his experience the past season he thought it might be generally adopted to advantage in the rural schools of the state.

His reply is as follows:

"The educational value of nature study and elementary agriculture in rural schools are many. By studying nature, the pupil is brought into proper relation to his natural environment; the love for nature is created and with it a great degree of reverence for the Great Creator through whose creatures his laws are revealed.

Not only are the facts of science acquired as a foundation for the later study of the sciences but the pleasures and joys derived from observation of natural environment and an intimate acquaintance with it elevates the individual to a higher ethical plane and assists him in appreciating more fully both nature and art.



By Courtesy Farm and Fireside

WHAT AGRICULTURAL CLUB WORK WILL DO.

"Flowers preach to us if we will hear."

—CHRISTINE ROSSETTI.

As to the immediate advantages in the school room, it may be said that a pupil whose mind is stocked with a knowledge of nature more easily acquires science text-book material; while children in elementary grades may know little about figures of speech, yet with some knowledge of nature they feel the meaning of many figures in

the literary selections of the readers and library books, simply because some characteristic of a plant or animal is made the basis for the figure. Since there is an intimate relation between the will and the emotions, and between nature and literature and the emotions, the problem of discipline is a much less difficult one. The pupil having a keen power of observation, spells better, punctuates more accurately, writes more carefully, and draws and measures more accurately.

Today the average text-book for elementary schools is not a text of fundamentals but is a supplementary readers as well. The result is a so-called "over-crowding of the curriculum," the truth of the matter is, as I see it, an over-supply of supplementary material in the class-text. In taking up this material at regular class periods and giving it fully as much consideration as that which is quite necessary, much valuable class time is lost. Supplementary material is necessary for reading outside the regular class period. The



"Ever changing, ever new,
When will the landscape tire the view?"

By Lewis

—DYER.

cries of 'over-crowded curriculum' and 'reading, writing, and arithmetic,—the core of the curriculum' have prevented the introduction of school work necessary to furnish a palatable and digestible flesh for the core,—the three R's. But to provide for the three H's—the head, the heart, and the hand—should be the public's duty in establishing, equipping, and maintaining schools; the head for a wealth of information and knowledge, the heart for moral and spiritual strength, and the hand for manual dexterity and skill.

For country schools, the study of the science of Agriculture and the practice of the art at home provide much for head, heart, and hand. Elementary Agriculture, as a science, puts the pupil in possession of scientific facts pertaining to soil, water, plant and insect friends and foes, cultivation, drainage, domestic animals, etc.

Traditional practices of the art must run the gauntlet of scientific tests. The early study of elementary Agriculture fixes the cardinal facts at a period of life when the mind is most impressionable.

When scientific facts are known, the individuals adapt themselves more easily to conditions; the farmer must learn quickly to adapt himself to conditions if he succeeds in his business. The element of pleasure that comes from overcoming difficulties and from seeing long-looked-for results must be in the mind of the laborer; if not, that which is work becomes drudgery. A farmer should work, not drudge.

The introduction of nature study and elementary Agriculture into the rural schools will furnish one means of elevating the child from a life looked upon by many as ignoble to one that is really noble. Yours for enrichment of rural life," A. B. GRAHAM.



"The maize field grew and ripened
Till it stood in all the splendor
Of its garments green and yellow." —LONGFELLOW.

By Lewis

LITERATURE

Every teacher who takes up this work should be familiar with some of the literature on the subject and also wherever possible some literature should be placed in the hands of the members of the clubs. The following list of books is recommended for this purpose:

FOR CLUB MEMBERS.

The list is given in the order in which they should be read and the first mentioned are intended for the younger members.

Plant Life,.....	Bass.
Animal Life,.....	Bass.
Play Time & Seed Time,.....	Parker.
On the Farm,.....	Parker.
Uncle Robert's Visit,.....	Parker.
Short Stories of Shy Neighbors,.....	Kelley.
Life on the Farm,.....	Shepard.
Agriculture for Beginners,.....	Burkett.
Principles of Agriculture,.....	Bailey.
Practical Agriculture,.....	James.

FOR TEACHERS.

Nature Study in Elementary Schools.....	Wilson.
First Book of Geography.....	Tarr & McMurray.
Child and Nature.....	Frye.
Stories of Insect Life.....	Weed.
Lessons With Plants.....	Bailey.

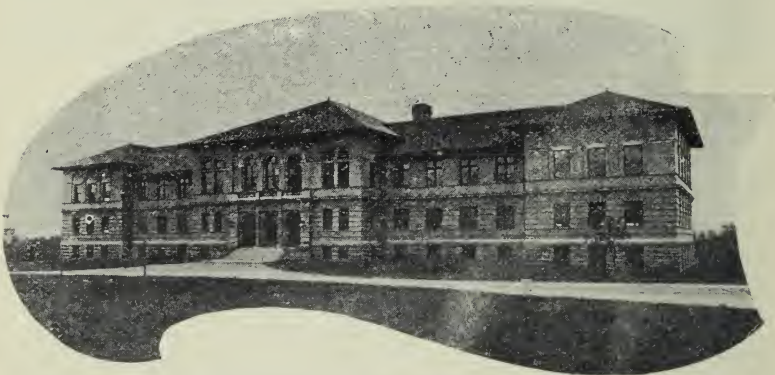
GOVERNMENT AND EXPERIMENT STATION PUBLICATIONS.

A large number of bulletins and other publications are being issued each year by the United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., and by the agricultural experiment stations of the different states and especially our own station at Wooster, Ohio. The most of this literature can be secured by simply writing for it and much of it will be found exceedingly valuable to the clubs. The publications which are especially recommended are:

The Year-Book.....	U. S. Dept. Agr., Washington, D. C.
Farmers' Bulletins.....	U. S. Dept. Agr., Washington, D. C.
Monthly List of Publications.....	U. S. Dept. Agr., Washington, D. C.
Weed Manual.....	Ohio Exp. Sta., Wooster, Ohio.
Birds of Wayne County.....	Ohio Exp. Sta., Wooster, Ohio.
Bulletins as Published.....	Ohio Exp. Sta., Wooster, Ohio.

The amount of work that can be offered this year is limited by our funds, and requests will be honored in the order in which they are received. A limited number of these bulletins may be furnished to parties desiring them for distribution.

Address all correspondence in regard to this work to the Dean of the College of Agriculture and Domestic Science, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.



THE GOAL TOWARD WHICH THE CLUBS LEAD

Townshend Hall College of Agriculture, Ohio State University



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